

ARIZONA DEPARTMENT OF WATER RESOURCES

500 North Third Street, Phoenix, Arizona 85004

Telephone 602 417-2410

Fax 602 417-2415



September 20, 2001

JANE DEE HULL
GovernorJOSEPH C. SMITH
Director**ARIZONA DEPARTMENT OF WATER RESOURCES****SUBSTANTIVE POLICY STATEMENT****WELL ABANDONMENT HANDBOOK****I. BACKGROUND**

The Arizona Department of Water Resources ("Department") is required by statute to adopt rules establishing construction standards for wells, including the abandonment of existing wells. A.R.S. § 45-594(A). The Department adopted such rules effective March 5, 1984, and amended the rules effective June 18, 1990. The well abandonment rule is set forth in Arizona Administrative Code ("A.A.C.") R12-15-816.

The Department's well abandonment rule requires that the abandonment of a well be accomplished "through filling or sealing the well so as to prevent the well, including the annular space outside the casing, from being a channel allowing the vertical movement of water." A.A.C. R12-15-816(G). Although the rule specifies the materials that must be used to fill or seal the well if it penetrates a single or multiple aquifer, the rule does not specify the materials that should be used if the well does not penetrate an aquifer or if groundwater or vadose zone contamination exists at or near the well site. Additionally, the rule does not prescribe a method for emplacing fill or seal materials in a well to ensure that water does not move vertically through the well after abandonment.

The Director has determined that the Department should provide additional written guidance to the public on well abandonment. The purpose of the written guidance is not to change any of the requirements in the Department's well abandonment rule or to impose any additional requirements. Instead, the written guidance is intended to assist well owners and well drillers in complying with A.A.C. R12-15-816(G) by informing them of fill materials and emplacement methods the Department considers to be adequate to seal a well in a manner that will prevent the well from being a channel allowing the vertical movement of water under various aquifer and vadose zone conditions. By following the written guidance, a person will be assured of complying with A.A.C. R12-15-816(G).

II. WELL ABANDONMENT THAT CONFORMS WITH THE APPLICABLE PROCEDURES IN THE ATTACHED WELL ABANDONMENT HANDBOOK WILL BE DEEMED TO BE IN COMPLIANCE WITH A.A.C. R12-15-816(G)

To assist well owners and well drillers in complying with A.A.C. R12-15-816, the Director issues the attached Well Abandonment Handbook as a substantive policy statement. The Handbook sets forth procedures for abandoning a well under most aquifer and vadose zone conditions, including special conditions not addressed in the Department's well abandonment rule. A person who abandons a well in conformance with the applicable procedures outlined in the Handbook will be deemed to be in compliance with A.A.C. R12-15-816(G).

III. EFFECTIVE DATE

This substantive policy statement shall become effective immediately. The Director may modify or revoke this policy at any time.

Dated this 20TH day of SEPTEMBER, 2001.



Joseph C. Smith
Director
Arizona Department of Water Resources